

*Rend[er]ing L.C.:
Susan Daitch Meets Borges & Borges,
Delacroix, Marx, Derrida, Daumier,
and Other Textualized Bodies*

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The Gallery Foyer: Epigraphs¹

The silent printing-press parts stored in the ship's hold twitch with unwritten sentences, language waiting to be born.

—Lucienne Crozier, *The Lucienne Crozier Diary*, 1848²

Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce . . . [A]ll the dead generations weigh . . . like a nightmare on the brain of the living.

—Karl Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852³

Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth.

—Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, 1966⁴

Gallery A, In Which Lucienne Crozier Meets Norah Borges

IT IS CURIOUS TO IMAGINE what Marx would have made of author Susan Daitch's first novel *L.C.* (U.S. 1987) where "facts and [women] of great [and little] importance in world history" recur not twice but at least three times in the course of the novel. Daitch's "trptych" introduces us to the lives of three complex female protagonists: Lucienne Crozier, a nineteenth-century French diarist and would-be revolutionary/document smuggler; Willa Rehnfield, an art historian/translator who comes upon Crozier's diary in 1968 and dies, work unfinished, in 1982; and *guerrillera*/archivist "Jane Amme" (an alias), Rehnfield's executrix, who comes to New York via Berkeley and finishes the good doctor's translating work, reworking sections of it in the process.

What brings these women (readers and writers all) together is Lucienne Crozier's singular diary. Ensconced by her friend Fabienne's family, under

wraps for over a century, it falls into Willa Rehnfield's hands almost by chance, almost by fate. If the versions of the diary that Daitch allows us to see are any evidence, Lucienne Crozier's interests and loves include painting, writing, and, not incidentally, moving about the Parisian salon scene (ca. 1847-48) with a painter named Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863).

But I am rehashing the plot, retelling the telling of the tale when the depiction of the telling of the tale is the essence of Daitch's novel itself. We might better spend our time with an issue at a tangent to the body of *L.C.*, one that concerns a certain subspecie of fiction where the manufacture and distribution of falsity abounds—detective stories, really, *on* and *about* paper. And as we hesitate, thinking about all the writings we know that survey this terrain (*Don Quixote*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Frankenstein*, *The Color Purple*), allow me to distract you with a bit of show and tell—a portrait of the Argentine *metaphrast* Jorge Luis Borges. The line drawing in question was drawn by Jorge Luis Borges's sister, Norah Borges, in 1926.⁵



Crafted by the female sibling of a well-known, creative man, these unadorned lines appear here to signal how the thematic and structural domain traversed by Borges and Daitch is quite similar. Think of Norah's portrait as an emblem or, better yet, an *insignia*; one that reminds us that in arts circles from Buenos Aires to New York, you are more apt to hear discussions about Jorge Luis Borges the male writer than Norah Borges the female artist. While this has mostly to do with the peculiarities of celebrity and fate, it has been impacted upon also by the relative status accruing to men and women *chez* intelligentsia. This, too, serves as a keynote for our reading of Daitch's intricately curated fiction: a sensitivity to the interplay of painting and literature with some regard for issues gendered and political will be of no little help as we go along.

So let us now move to a statement by the late Emir Rodriguez Monegal, Borges's biographer, as he speaks of the Latino fabulist's talented *hermana*: "Norah was destined to become a painter and a draftsman, and in her works she leaves testimony of the familial world she shared with her brother" (27). This "testimony," Norah Borges's record of her writer/brother's figure along with her brother's written *corpus*, will become more important below when we arrive at a scene in *L.C.* where Lucienne Crozier attempts to draw Eugène Delacroix. It is a visual ally as we attempt to determine and assign meaning along this rendered *frontera*, this novel canvas named *L.C.*

We leave Norah now and turn to Jorge Luis and to the opening of his short story "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" (1940); the selection needs little setting up, save that Borges appears as himself in the story:

The whole affair happened some five years ago. Bioy Casares had dined with me that night and talked to us at length about a great scheme for writing a novel in the first person, using a narrator who omitted or corrupted what happened and who ran into various contradictions, so that only a handful of readers, a very small handful, would be able to decipher the horrible or banal reality behind the novel. From the far end of the corridor, the mirror was watching us; and we discovered, with the inevitability of discoveries made late at night, that mirrors have something grotesque about them.⁶

Throughout "Tlön" Borges develops what one might call a *reliable unreliability* (his signature storytelling effect, really) as he tells of a locale that ostensibly only exists in some limited numbers of a reprinted encyclopedia. As different versions of different reference books hand Borges and his cohorts contradictory evidence regarding the "reality" of this place, intrigue and frustration mount as the "forking paths" within the labyrinth multiply. Soon, Tlön's existence in texts intrudes into the protagonists' "reality" as time itself breaks down—written in 1940, the story was published with a postscript dated "1947." One leaves this *historia* with the distinct feeling that what we call real and what we call fiction are less contiguous entities and more cohabiting, "copulating" beings—not for nothing does the story unfold as the result of a disputed apocrypha attributed to the heresiarchs of Uqbar: that copulation and mirrors are abominable as they both "multiply the numbers of men" (112). "Tlön" navigates the dialectical interplay of textual subjects and human subjects, revealing how marks and lines on secreted pages impress themselves upon the minds and bodies of their keepers.

What makes this story such a useful analog to Susan Daitch's *L.C.* (via our pause at Norah Borges's portrait) are the overlaps: each problematizes the status of the narrator; each is filled with obscure translations of scattered, forgotten papers; each turns on the appearance and disappearance of sequestered texts; and lastly, each vibrates with an eerie paranoid intrigue marrying art, politics, and textuality—for that reason, among others, we encountered Pynchon in our foyer.

Gallery B, Where *L.C.* Is Revealed as a Mirror for Academics

Card-catalogue fetishists and stacks-prowlers alike will revel in the twists, turns, and erasures scattered throughout Daitch's novel, for *L.C.* is a book designed for the consumption of bibliophiles and their ilk. Like Eco's *Name of the Rose*, this is a tale crafted for readers zealous, perhaps even a bit pathological, about the archive. Theorists, aesthetes, and pundits may disagree about just about everything, but most will agree about their love of libraries. While we fervently catalogue the contents of de Sade's sock drawer, Woolf's notebooks, or Cervantes's wine budget, trying to locate a thematic analog here, an insignificant lacuna there, we disclose to all our fervid worship of textual traces. Seizing upon these predilections, Daitch

baits the trap, and as it seems sensible to agree with Borges's suggestion that "analyses of the technique of the novel have not . . . been wholly exhausted," I will spend some time examining Daitch's lures.⁷

Almost paraphrasing Borges's and Bioy Casares's exchange from the opening of "Tlön," Susan Daitch recently disclosed tidbits about her structuring of *L.C.*, offering that it would treat of a text that "is invented, [and] would only be represented to readers through other versions [and] translations, never directly."⁸ Throughout, she anticipates the exegetic labors of her academic interpreters. Take this late entry from the diary where Lucienne Crozier ponders the indignities of a mandated cross-dressing: "8 August 1848: There's nothing for me to do. . . . All I can do here is dress up as a man. I have begun to consider returning to France. *The male/female, Frenchification/Arabization dichotomies may be interesting to some academic, but to me they're riddled with contradictions which hold no fascination*" (273, emphasis added). Readers of the novel will recall that Daitch has cleverly played (echoing Marx from the *Brumaire* to a certain extent) with the figure of doubling throughout; here, she undercuts somewhat the novelty of our analytical revelation. Earlier she pre-writes a section in some future essay to be written on Jane Amme's name: "Amme is Emma spelled backward, for my grandmother, for Goldman, and for Bovary. *L'âme* is the French word for soul and there's a pun on aim" (171). Daitch's critic is left in the lurch—our moves foreseen, our exegesis presented to us, we are left as muted spectators, silent: temporarily at least.

Preface to a Gallery Annex, Forget Literary Criticism, Let's Talk Pictures

If we are to assess the dynamics of speculation (and *L.C.* is nothing if not the diary of three voyeurs—a meditation on the politics of watching), we will need assistance. A referee as it were. The increasingly erratic and unusually prolix continental guide Jacques Derrida seems a useful, if not totally *appropriate* candidate, given the thought he has applied to the subject. And the selection to which we now move tentatively is of no little importance, especially given the degree to which paintings figure in *L.C.*—some memory of the mirror reference from Borges will also leave us in good stead. Derrida: "Any discourse about the relationship between literature and truth always bumps up against the enigmatic possibility of repetition, within the framework of the *portrait*."⁹ Who is closer to rendering the truth? The writer? The painter? The painter who paints an image of something s/he has read? Everything is up for grabs in Derrida's close reading of Plato's *Philebus* where portraiture is brought to the fore as a lauded counterpoint to the mimetic, untrustworthy, practice of writing: images win out over words. Derrida plays with Plato's valorized notion of portraits as he thinks through word and image interrelations, ultimately questioning the role these contrasting modes of representation have played in the construc-

tion of "truth" with a small "t."

Here let us pause again and consider a salient coincidence which will help fuse our interests in representation with our discussion of Daitch's novel. A few months after Willa Rehnfield receives the diary of Lucienne Crozier from the shadowy arms dealer/art dealer/rapist Luc Ferrier/Guy Masterson in France, Jacques Derrida delivers "La Double Séance" (1969) as two long lectures in Paris—the words quoted above were originally delivered at this forum. An indulgent yet indignant reader might interrupt here to remind your guide that Jacques Derrida is *real* and Willa Rehnfield a mere fiction—of what importance could it be that Derrida was lecturing at the same moment a fictional character was engaged in acts of *adulterated* translation? While your guide appreciates the corrective, he must also say that this kind of demand for textual segregation gums up the works of our inquiry—in other words, bear with me: "the enigmatic possibility of repetition," of a connection between worlds real and worlds textual, must be allowed to stand—for Norah Borges, Daitch, "Tlön," and Lucienne Crozier's sake.

Would that we could remain with the paradox of text as portrait, of portrait as text, but as we near the next *fin de siècle*, we know that paintings are kids' play compared to the images now accessible via corporate engines of telecommunication. We, arbiters of all things textual live and write in a world, in an "industrial" world which has "turn[ed] their citizens into image-junkies." Those of us who speak to the nuance of worlds literary and artistic must countenance, as Susan Sontag ably suggested two decades previous, that our is world awash with "the most irresistible form of mental pollution."¹⁰ Sontag's finding is another corrective to bring along as we describe Daitch's fiction. The ubiquity of image-texts, late capital's refinement of visual sensory saturation as a means to maximizing profit in a global context, makes the questions raised by Daitch's *L.C.* even more meaningful. Echoing Thomas Pynchon's gloss from the foyer, expatriate Cuban theorist Severo Sarduy sings the obsessive refrain of our inquiry nicely: "What gave ride to graphy, of what reality is every letter a hieroglyphic, what does each sign hide and displace?"¹¹

Gallery C,

Where Differing Versions of Lucienne Crozier Are Considered

With each partition of the book, the version of Lucienne Crozier's life one reads is contaminated by the given reader/writer/translator. Willa Rehnfield, beset by the anxiety of action (the sticky inertia of years spent watching, and dying a slow death to boot), renders a Lucienne slowly consumed by disease in Algiers. Jane Amme, on the run and living "off the books" under an assumed name, casts a Lucienne consumed by the idea of disguise, of costume. Amme's Lucienne is a daring, anything-but-ill Lucienne who thinks more about the strategic importance of her revolutionary activi-

ties than the Lucienne to be found in similar moments culled from Willa's translated pages. Lastly, we are faced with the author of the diary herself: can we "trust" Lucienne Crozier? Can we credit the life one commits to paper via words, clippings, and letters placed into a journal—ought we not heed Willa Rehnfield's remark that "diarists are under no obligation to write the truth about themselves" (5)?

Early on, one begins to get the sense that Jane Amme is on to Dr. Willa Rehnfield's pattern of translation "filtering." The hints come early, with Jane Amme's footnotes speaking unobtrusively to minor anomalies in Rehnfield's translation—as when she notes that Crozier's mention of dynamite is unlikely in a text written in 1848.¹² Later she intervenes again: "I don't believe that the word or concept of the picket line existed in 1847" (114). The earnestness of these careful interventions might lead a less than careful reader to *believe* that Jane is a reliable guide. But this needs a second look. The only thing that may well makes us trust "Jane" is the way she does not trust Willa: "Dr Rehnfield pressed her passages over the lines [of Lucienne]; a *blurry palimpsest, she was the Robaut*¹³ *of Lucienne Crozier's diary . . . her framing intrudes into the picture . . . [leaving] a story of deceit and subterfuge*" (163, emphasis added). Later, Jane reveals more about these assorted elisions: "I laid the first torn pages of Lucienne's diary on my desk next to Willa's pages. The meaning of her English bore little resemblance to the original French. Misreadings grew, took on the proportions of invented fictions on the part of the translator. My pencilled corrections turned into entire passages so I started with my own translation from the beginning of the existing French pages" (220). Reading with "Jane," we come to trust Jane—the last executor of this traveling triptych. By the time Jane warns us how "the reader is acquainted with the characters of writer and translator but doesn't really know the biases of *this* reader" (220), we are ready to relax and believe that we are finally at rest, luxuriating in "the pleasure of reading a reliable witness" (208).

But we ought not get carried away, for Jane's version of Lucienne Crozier's diary is also somewhat less than reliable. It is as if a multitude of people had gathered within Plato's cave to play at shadows on the wall, and the shadows themselves were not shadows but holograms of shadows recorded at another place, another time. So we know Rehnfield is suspect; dying miserably and in pain for a good deal of her last days, these experiences pierce the metaphorical margins of the text and write themselves into Lucienne's life: "Disease is my body's response to memory, the desire to return. I have often thought that I don't want to be here: the knowledge found its way into my lungs, my bloodstream. My corporeal self has provided a perverse way out" (196). Supposedly the voice of Lucienne in Algiers, the counterpoint of Willa's decline echoes through the silent interstices of the translated words on the page. In Jane Amme's translation of the same section of the Crozier diary, there is no mention of a disease—save for figural references to sickness. But this does not mean to say that Jane's

version of the diary is without problems of its own—in spite of her seeming openness: “Some may accuse me of writing an epilogue that is also a memoir. I’m uncomfortable with the idea of a memoir. It implies a preciousness I don’t believe I can or want to lay claim to, and memoirs are about looking back. My epilogue is a Book II, *a running commentary in the margins of the diary*” (220, emphasis added). Willa’s presence lurks in the metaphorical margins of the text, while Jane’s epilogue serves a running commentary in the figural margins of the diary. Both are deliciously suspect.

How does the trace of Jane Amme’s signature make its way into Lucienne’s story? Via the real pressure exerted upon her by her alias—from her having gone underground and become another person. Slowly but surely this anxiety works its way into Lucienne’s account of her time in Algiers: “Part of the nature of being a fugitive curtails documentation. I wrote on little bits of paper, kept them for a week, then threw them away” (257). The existential fallout of life lived on the run speaks here with an urgency not found in the Rehnfield translations. In the following selection, as Jane shapes Lucienne’s words on life in Algiers, the sickness to which she alludes is of a different nature than that to be found in Rehnfield’s version of the very same days: “The anticipation of arrest when one has bored so deeply into the earth that there is no place left to go, no other disguise in the closet, is like a prelude to sickness” (280-81). Angst versus consumption, Jane versus Willa.

In 1966, two years before Lucienne Crozier’s diary would surface in Paris, Pierre Macherey wrote that the “speech of [a] book comes from a certain silence,” anticipating thematic elements of the translation Willa Rehnfield would make of Lucienne Crozier’s diary, of the restoration work Jane Amme would make of Willa’s papers.¹⁴ His words allow us better access to the dialectic of text and absence, of mark and erasure, of speech and silence echoing throughout Daitch’s first novel. Signs, signs, and more signs: from a different language, translated by different authors. Cumulatively, these signs coalesce, spelling out at least one of the novel’s propositions: that we examine and then renounce our faith in a “thing-in-itself” outside of competing texts. “In my translation I’ve tried to stay true to the original” (262), Jane Amme notifies us towards the end of the novel, and we must do anything but take her at her word. Whose “original” does she speak about, whose “truth?” More honest are the prefatory declarations of the guilty mis-translator Willa Rehnfield, who declares: “the voice of the translator . . . is destined to appear in the literal and the metaphorical margins of the text” (8). It is that second phrase (“the metaphorical margins of the text”) that the savvy reader of Borges and Pynchon, the habitu  of Remedios Varo and Frida Kahlo’s haunting painted allegories will lock onto. If the translator’s voice is to be found in the metaphorical margins of the text and these literal and thematic margins lace their way through the volume, then where are we to imagine that one woman stops and the other begins. Soon we are *seduced*, “lead . . . without”—led away by Crozier/

Rehnfield/Amme's three-part (dis)harmony, orchestrated off-camera by Daitch, behind the curtain, visible and unassailable all at once.¹⁵

Gallery D, Where *L. C.* Is Presented as a Historical Artifact

All this unreliability. And yet we require some balance, something to hold on to in the midst of all this intrigue. One mooring? Daitch's insightful critique of French and United States culture in 1848, 1968, 1982, and, necessarily, 1987 when the book appeared, particularly with regard to women—especially women resisting the status quo status of other women. After all, what is it about nineteenth century-bound Lucienne Crozier that appeals to these late-twentieth-century textual exegetes—to Dr. Willa Rehnfield, to Jane Amme? Some measure of explanation rests with the time in which she wrote, loved, traveled, and drew. Eighteen forty-eight: Louis Philippe is out of France; the United States confiscates California, Texas, and Nevada (and others) as reparations booty from Mexico; Marx and Engels issue the *Communist Manifesto*; and a guy named Böttger invents the safety match. Across the globe, events big and small transpired and were recorded, not the least of which will be the arrival in Paris of Louis Bonaparte salaciously chronicled in Marx's *Brumaire*.

But let us look at one aspect of this nineteenth-century revolt—the resistance of organized groups of politically savvy women. Said innovation on the part of one historically muted part of the polis was not received without *discussion* by the other half. In Willa Rehnfield's unpublished introduction to the diary, the secretive academic clues us into the milieu of Lucienne Crozier by noting a Daumier print popular in Paris—a political cartoon whose caption read: "The insurrection against husbands is proclaimed the most sacred of duties."¹⁶ Here, Rehnfield's exegesis appears alongside Daumier's illustration:



Is the laying on of hands part of a witches' spell? . . . The women are ugly. Nineteenth-century cartoons, as a rule, represented suffragettes, socialist women and blue stockings as harpies and harridans. . . . [Not the] original product of Daumier's comic vision[,] his series on women's movements reflected the popular sentiment of his time. . . . These are women who divorce themselves from domesticity and conventional sexuality, threatening to skew society's established lines of gender straight to hell. (3)

Daumier's drawing, one of a series attacking suffragette groups of the period, characterizes one drawing male subject's view of gender role changes that were part of a perceived general crisis, of which women were an annoying part. The reference to Daumier's portrait sets the stage as it

were for the entrance of Eugène Delacroix, an artist like Daumier whose view of woman singularly modified the course of his artistic development.

How the relative status of women vis-à-vis men limited/mandated their options, their choices, is an issue close to the core of Daitch's volume. As the diary begins, Lucienne/Willa/"Jane"/Daitch's reader soon gathers that like other women in France circa 1840, Crozier views marriage as a way to sustain her position, or better, to move one step up the socio-economic ladder: she marries so as to guard the solvency of her mother and to send her brother to school (34-35). At this moment, she is less the insurrectionist suffragette and more the bourgeois opportunist. This soon ends after she encounters Charles Crozier's parents; let us sample Lucienne on her in-laws, the Croziers: "So rarely was I addressed directly I was like an inanimate object—something one has a legal obligation to keep around but can ignore at the same time" (19). Daitch continues in this vein with clever twists which makes for painfully detailed prose portraits—as with Lucienne's apt description of her marriage with Charles as the "repetitive fabrication of images for a salary" (28).

Needless to say, the women translating Lucienne Crozier's words in the late twentieth century find themselves in a markedly different context—though some features of that existence remain stubbornly intact. Which brings us to the particular textual concerns of our last curator, Jane Amme, who at Berkeley in the 1960s works at "rectifying history's erasures" (248). The issues of texts and truth, trust and reliability have one meaning when we are identifying a common genealogy that includes Borges, Pynchon, and Daitch, not to mention Cervantes; they have another when we are speaking to the historical elision of textual artifacts produced by one particular gender of the at least two genders that make up Western culture(s). A fictional character in her own right, Jane Amme works nonetheless to avoid the role of a "sculpted [female] simulacra, end[ing] her life in a fictional space."¹⁷ As she re-crafts Lucienne's testimony from French to English, from Lucienne to Lucienne/Jane, we begin to understand something more about the collective efforts of these female archeologists. Daitch's novel then, is a response to the anxiety of absence, a clarion call to artists, writers, and historians to re-think the trace of *woman* in the textual history of the west. This project has its costs, but even secretive Jane is willing to submit herself to the immolation of spectacle if it means recovering lost bodies (of work)—not forgotten women, but erased ones: "I lived in secrecy but indulged in the idea that my entire life was in the process of being recorded as a dramatic film" (217).¹⁸

From 1848 the novel moves to 1968: Alexander Dubcek attempts reforms as newly appointed First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party—he will soon be called to Moscow to be boxed about by Brezhnev; Martin Luther King's neck and Bobby Kennedy's head will be pierced by bullets in Memphis and Los Angeles; as Gore Vidal issues the striking *Myra Breckinridge*, Pope Paul VI weighs in with his equally striking

Humanae Vitae against all forms of artificial contraception—meanwhile college campuses across the nation are on fire with resistance to the inane vulgarities of the Vietnam War. This is the backdrop of the player named Jane Amme: both an activist fomenting and an historian chronicling the crises of her particular moment in history.

Daitch's choice of years is instructive: 1848, 1968. At least part of the commonalities shared by events that occurred during these years are the long-term failures of popular resistance movements: of a Paris uprising that ended with the *farical* arrival of Louis Bonaparte, of a collective United States uprising, particularly vehement in California, that ironically prefaced the arrival of the associated-with-San-Clemente Republican president, Richard Nixon. Of course, the question of revolution and its outcome does not end with '48 and '68; Jane Amme is working with her texts in 1982, the early zenith of what might come to be called the Age of Ronald Reagan—when images and all their ideal revolutionary, combative, resistant potential were revealed to be equally effective as the willing ally of a vaudevillian fascism kindly and gently administered by a smiling, intellectually bankrupt arbiter. Bonaparte, Nixon, and Reagan: collective crisis would not seem to bring much in the way of lasting progress to communities flushed with the passion of collective resistance, and it is this unstated suspicion that underlies Daitch's novel.

Gallery E, Where We Prepare to Watch Eugène Delacroix

And now we are in a position to understand the role of Eugène Delacroix in *L.C.* At the same time we will find ourselves amidst history and art history, disciplines with little or no commerce. This brings us to a kind of target we might associate with Daitch's novel, reading it as an exposé of the claims of artists who record art for its own sake, those who paint not so much to capture history, but to *erect* themselves a place *in* art history. Enter Delacroix, and with him Daitch's theory of art. Of course, it is safer to say Lucienne Crozier's theory of art, but Daitch is in there somewhere. In any event, Crozier seems particularly disturbed with the dynamics (inertia might be closer to her view) of Delacroix's *vision*: "Paintings could be a delicate bridge between the painter and the present tense but they only root [Delacroix] more solidly with his back to the window" (66). The bridge between the painter and the present tense is similar if not identical to that connecting the photographer and the present tense and the novelist and the present tense. Consider that if ever a novel can be said to resist the signs of the times it is *L.C.* Not for the way it speaks to the ubiquity of images—that is *de riguer* these days—no, it resists the signs of the times in the way it provides a critical armature to unmask these signs, to semiotically intervene at the site of their unveiling. After all, it is Willa Rehnfield's description of Lucienne's resistance, her political acuity, rare, or at least unattributed to women at the time, that attract Jane Amme to her: "At meetings

of the revolutionary cell, *14 Juillet*, [Lucienne] became familiar with theories of how capitalism functions and survives. She read Pierre Joseph Proudon, some Marx, perhaps Bakunin" (2). All this work while living in the "bourgeois regime of Louis-Philippe . . . particularly repressive in its attitude towards women" (2). These characteristics, nestled amidst other autobiographical disclosures, appeal to these two spiritual daughters. And the interim years have brought progress: Jane moves beyond Lucienne's legacy without erasing the lineage they share: a budding photojournalist during a politically combative moment in U.S. history, Jane throws away her camera, rejecting the "hinges," the "filters," and, most importantly, "the compromise of the half-hearted, the ones who watched" (230). Jane throws away the camera and, as if in league with Lucienne, throws off also an indifference identified in the novel with Delacroix: the inertia-laced watcher whose "pencil [is the] precursor of Daguerre's invention" (45).

Were one to translate Daitch's view, there remains something antithetical between analysis and action, history and resistance, the challenge being to produce the analysis that would not restore the status quo. How does one craft a representation that is not always already working to undermine *event-icity*. Crozier, Rehnfield, "Amme," Daitch, and even I, your humble textual aide, "are left with a different wondering" similar to that of theorist Michael Taussig, of "how to write the Nervous System that passes through us and makes us what we are—the problem being . . . that every time you give it a fix, it hallucinates, or worse, counters your system with its nervousness, your nervousness with its system." Glossing Adorno on Hegel, Taussig concludes: "knowing is giving oneself over to a phenomenon rather than thinking about it from above."¹⁹ In short, we do not have the luxury of lounging about with our "back[s] to the window." Too many others reap existential (and other forms of) capital from that scheme.

Delacroix's art appeals neither to Lucienne nor to Jane Amme. He would find nothing appealing in that which Lucienne's diary records with lyric glee on 24 February 1848. In the midst of chaos, mobs, and people, Lucienne records the following fleeting image: "a child next to me held a long chunk of gilt picture frame, a baroque club" (127).

The Last Canvas

We are brought to that moment in *L.C.* when Delacroix and Crozier exchange strokes on canvas and on each other's bodies. This is a key sequence, where all our critical speculations come together or, better put, clash in an informative *mélange*. Delacroix had traveled to Morocco and other locales in the decade preceding 1848 and, as his "pictorial biographer" Yvonne Deslandres has it, "brought back costumes and various other trophies from his voyage."²⁰ In *L.C.*, Lucienne Crozier and Eugène Delacroix don these Moroccan garments as a prelude to painting and other assorted actions. Of course, standard garments in one context become exotic costumes in an-

other, with all the attendant eroticism one attaches to desired objects eccentric to one's locale. Here, like it or not, the exotic *is* erotic. Let me caution my reader not to be altogether suspect of the slant here offered. I am sensitive how close to *la frontera* of prudery this tack traverses and without doubt the critique of empire will impact unfavorably on practices of erotic adventurism. But our efforts here are not to circumscribe either exotic localities or erotic pleasures, but to understand how one underwrites the other: how one of the attendant residua of empire is the production of exotic and erotic pleasure zones for the exercise of sexual desire—in this respect, the prosperity of bordertown bordellos across the globe needs to be re-thought.

So, the scene is set: Eugène and Lucienne in the studio, painting each other's costumed body. First let us sample Delacroix's drawing of Lucienne, identified in *L.C.* as *The Portrait of a Woman in a Moroccan Costume*:



Now, Crozier's
drawing of
Eugène:



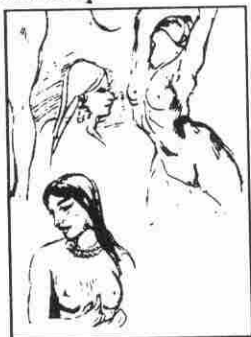
As we allow the visages to linger there above this printed line, let us move to Lucienne Crozier's description of this moment as recorded in her journal and translated by Willa Rehnfield: "The effect of being drawn and examined so closely was difficult to bear. It's very much like being touched, as if the eye were a hand. . . . I found a smaller sheet . . . and started to draw Eugène *but I didn't imagine my pencil touched him in the same way*" (47, emphasis added). After this exchange the pair have sex and *L.C.* records that these events took place on the third day of May, 1847. And if one turns to the entry for that day in the *real* diaries of Eugène Delacroix, one finds that Lucienne's suspicion (that she hadn't "touched him in the same way") is true given the amount of space Eugène allots the event: "I do wrong to utter my opinion so freely among people who are not my friends"; in other words, no mention at all.²¹ Baudelaire's view of his friend in this regard is uncannily astute: "Delacroix made Painting his only muse, his only mistress, his sole and self-sufficient voluptuousness."²²

But I have been less than totally honest with you, my indulgent reader—it is that problem of reality and fiction again: how could one expect there to be an entry in Delacroix's diary of an event that exists in the life of a fictional character? And furthermore, about that drawing of Lucienne which was just presented—how could it exist? After all, we are firmly within the

pages of the *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, not in Tlön, after all. Of course, the answer is that I have reproduced a couple of pictures that represent other people, other documentable people, though I am somewhat confident these images did inspire Daitch to write her novel. Actually, the drawings depicted above are of and by Delacroix and Pauline Villot. Villot, the wife of an associate of Delacroix, played out this exercise in mutual affection via canvas some fourteen years previous to Delacroix's tryst with Lucienne Crozier. While I will not allow myself to speculate as to the nature of Villot and Delacroix's relationship, I will allow Deslandres to speculate as to the *substance* of their exchange: "it is *pleasant to imagine* the day in 1833 when the *ravishing Pauline* put on the disguise—and the artist, in return, seems to have sat for her in Arab costume" (75, emphasis added). Pauline Villot, like the *fictional* Lucienne Crozier, like the *real* Norah Borges, is a footnote to the career of a "leading" man—and while there are other banal reasons for this, I do not think it entirely untoward to suggest that the absence of significant levels of testosterone and the presence of a vagina and breasts on their bodies may have had something to do with the matter.

And what is the effect of this unequal exchange in the pages of *L.C.*? Lucienne grows suspect of her painter/lover. As time goes on, their relationship changes—or perhaps it is Crozier's sensitivity to the dynamics of *love Delacroix style* that evolves. Take her reaction to the backdrop of their carnal/artistic intrigue, Delacroix's studio, where "women are everywhere . . . more prevalent than any creature in his imagination." While the volume of female figures strikes Lucienne as formidable, the range of postures remains predictably limited with "women as property" and women "as victim" most in evidence. "Postures of spiralling supplication or solitary flirtation before the mirror" (72) accost Delacroix's visitor like grotesque wallpaper from every wall.

A few pages earlier, Crozier records her post-climax thoughts regarding the sexual end of their encounter—whether *she* has one or not remains a mystery, as Daitch avoids coital details. The tone of the passage invites an accompaniment of sorts, so as I quote Crozier's words, I will allow a page from Delacroix's notebook to appear also alongside—consider it an informing backdrop:



I'm an intruder in a library of portraits. . . . As I lie on my back with one hand under my head and the other braced on the window sill, I'm as mute and as passive as my picture and he might just as well have that bit of paper in bed with him as my corporeal self. (55)

Because Willa Rehnfield's introduction to her unpublished translation of Lucienne's diary records how "women were considered part of their husbands' accumulated property[, were] denied citizenship, [and] had the same legal rights as lunatics and the mentally deficient" (3), we ought not find Lucienne's thoughts or Delacroix's sketches altogether surprising—especially given the context of nineteenth-century France. It might prove more useful to allow their appearance to move us in a related direction, to conceive of them as words and images that allow us to reconsider human bodies (female *and* male ones), and of bodies of work also, as peculiar and manipulable objects. This is something to resist and question, to resist via questioning. And here the singular voices of Crozier, Rehnfield, Amme, and Daitch might be seen to meld in harmony against a vicious and insidious nightmare, where "stretching behind and ahead is a life of costume changes guided literally and metaphorically by a man's hand" (270).

Daitch's novel tells again and again the story of women and paper trails, of relations between the female body (politic) and hands gliding across canvases, writing on pages. While engines of representation do not intrinsically discriminate, they do necessarily objectify and gender has had something to do with the distribution breakdown. And even though Daitch "hesitate[s]" to use "that poor old war horse of a word, *the gaze*," her novel does succinctly act out and display determinate elements of the gaze's processes: how graphic tracings of what artists and writers *see* impacts upon the bodies of subjectivities, on eyes and on the *I*, on souls subjected to its taunt, its dynamic refractive logic. In this respect, *L.C.* may be seen as an respondent in a dialogue with Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*.

The attractions of Susan Daitch's *L.C.* for literary and artistic voyeurs of every specie are many. This having been stated, we ought not forget the communal sentiment signaled by its female author Lucienne Crozier as she pondered the fortuitous gift of a blank journal from her friend Fabienne Ruban: "the act of committing my life to paper belies a secret wish for someone other than myself to crack the binding, for there to be other witnesses, someone to be sympathetic, to take my side" (17). Lucienne Crozier ought not to have worried; her desire was taken up and honored in the most significant way possible—it was repeated. Like a mirror held up to a journal reflected in another mirror, the textual adventures and intrigues of Willa Rehnfield, and of Jane Amme, who may or may not constitute a portrait of Susan Daitch, perform the drama of an originary signature—*L.C.* as the biography of an autobiography.

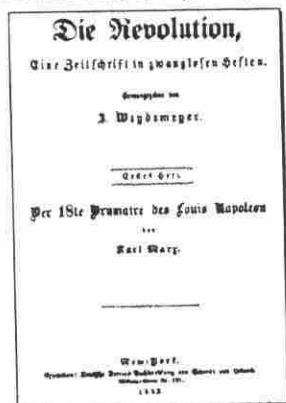
Signatory members of a collective project beyond erasure, beyond elision, the novel's author and her protagonists disclose a site where the body of works named woman rends and renders the labyrinthine confines of library and gallery alike.

NOTES

¹The frame of this expository effort uses the peculiarities of an art museum as its model—there are many galleries, some finished, many still under construction. Epigraphs function much as foyers do: we enter a sculpted space and a keynote is struck as we move to the site of an unfolding.

²Susan Daitch, *L.C.* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), 192; hereafter cited parenthetically.

³Karl Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, translator not identified (New York: International Publishers, 1963), 15. The frontispiece of that document looked something like the one which appears here sampled from a paperback book printed in 1967, available in bookstores and libraries in the United States in 1968. It is this lineage which marks its inclusion in this discussion; also, I found it ironic that there is absolutely no trace of the translator of the work to be found anywhere in the volume. This will prove to have an uncanny resonance with topics discussed in this essay.



⁴Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (New York: Perennial Fiction, 1986), 181.

⁵In preparation for this essay I decided to spend a few days immersed in the cold, adequate corridors of SDSU's Love Library. I soon understood that reading *L.C.* necessitated diligent work with pictures. Faced with an outrageous deadline, I decided to produce a photographic/xerographic montage which I could then "quote" at appropriate moments. The work is entitled "Desperately Seeking Lucienne." While similar representations of all the images reproduced in this article may be found in the books cited—for example, a version of Norah Borges's drawing can be seen in Emir Rodriguez Monegal's *Jorge Luis Borges: A Literary Biography* (New York: Dutton, 1978)—the images themselves are digitized details of one mixed-media work produced by this author: © 1993 W. A. Nericcio. What you will be seeing then, are digitized, sometimes altered refractions/translations of a Xeroxed photograph of a collection of open books placed atop a Renaissance-era tapestry on a table in Love Library. These books are open to pages where photographic reproductions of drawings by Delacroix, Villot, Borges, and Daumier appear—the frontispiece of Marx's *Brumaire* figures prominently in the center of the artifact. In short, "Desperately Seeking Lucienne" is a picture of *L.C.*, a proposition forwarded with some anxiety, with the anxiety Willa Rehnfield attributes to Lucienne Crozier—an anxiety born from an understanding that the "routes between life's events and their representation through painting [are]...murky and unreliable (8). Note: allow me to add that my pictorial work is dedicated to John Heartfield, German pioneer of photomontage and an antagonist to the Third Reich. Born in 1891, he died in 1968—this too, is not without some significance—Dawn Ades, *Photomontage* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976), 19-36; Bernard Grun, *The Timetables of History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), 563.

⁶Jorge Luis Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," in *Borges: A Reader*, ed. and trans. Alastair Reid and Emir Rodriguez Monegal (New York: Dutton, 1981), 112.

⁷Jorge Luis Borges, "Narrative Art and Magic" (1932) in *Borges: A Reader*, 34.

⁸This is drawn from Daitch's interview with Larry McCaffery earlier in this issue.

⁹Jacques Derrida, "The Double Session," in Peggy Kamuf, ed., *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 174.

¹⁰Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Delta, 1973), 24. It will be noted that several of my secondary references derive from the field of photographic criticism as opposed to art history/theory. This speaks to the tastes of your guide as much as to the hegemonic status said technology now holds in the world as we know it. Painting is painting, but most paintings we now see are brought to us courtesy of a camera. Daitch, never very far from the game, anticipates this view when Lucienne/Willa examining Delacroix sketches records the following notes: "Drawings as recordings, documents of human and animal motion, a way of producing and fixing graphic memory. The pencil as a precursor of Daguerre's invention" (45).

¹¹Severo Sarduy, "From Yin to Yang," in *Written on a Body*, ed. and trans. Carol Meier (New York: Lumen Books, 1989), 22.

¹²While at Berkeley, Jane assists in the bombing murder of Luc Ferrier, the aforementioned art dealer/arms merchant who may well have raped Amme using the alias Guy Masterson—having worked with explosives in this attack, Amme's early footnote appears as a savory bit of foreshadowing.

¹³Robaut edited Delacroix's diaries, taking liberties with their transcription (*L.C.* 163).

¹⁴Pierre Macherey, *Towards a Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1978), 85.

¹⁵All etymological speculation in this essay derives from *The New Century Dictionary of the English Language*, ed. by H.G. Emery (New York: Appleton-Century, 1946); this particular derivation appears on p. 1650. Emery's opus was selected for its age, texture and its detail—in particular, the number of illustrations.

¹⁶The first version of this was published in *Le Charivari* 20, 1849. It can also be found in Françoise Parturier's *Daumier: Lib Women (Bluestockings and Socialist Women)*, trans. Howard Brabyn (Paris and New York: Leon Amiel Publisher, 1974), plate 48.

¹⁷W.A. Nericcio, "Sordid Speculations on What Might Occur if Frantz Fanon, Rosario Castellanos, Jacques Derrida, Gayatri Spivak, and Sandra Cisneros Asked Rita Hayworth Her Name: TheoryCelebrityShame," *Romance Language Annual* 3 (1991): 539.

¹⁸This recalls Lucienne's friend Fabienne's view of Lucienne's marriage: "To Fabienne, my marriage is a serialized drama. . . . If she's sympathetic for voyeuristic reasons, I'm unhappy enough to exploit the moments of potential exhibitionism when they occur" (27).

¹⁹Michael Taussig, *The Nervous System* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 10.

²⁰Yvonne Deslandres, *Delacroix: A Pictorial Biography* (New York: Viking, 1963), 74-75.

²¹*The Journal of Eugène Delacroix*, trans. Walter Pach (New York: Covici Friede, 1937), 164.

²²Charles Baudelaire, *Eugène Delacroix: His Life and Work*, trans. Joseph M. Bernstein (New York: Lear, 1947), 82. This book originally appeared in 1863.